A

TREATISE

Againſt

Irreligion.

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To the Right Reverend Father in God, *John* Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*, Dean of *Chriſt-Church*. &c.

My Lord,

A *Treatiſe againſt* Irreligion, *cannot be better directed then to your Lordſhip; whoſe life is one of the beſt proofs we have for Religion; whence we may not only conclude the truth of Chriſtianity, but alſo that its ſevereſt rules are eaſy and practicable. Irreligious men may elude the cleareſt demonſtrations, and* laugh them to ſcorn; *but they cannot but wonder at, and yeild up themſelves to thoſe great examples which appear in your Lordſhips conduct. They ſtrike at their hearts with an irreſiſtible force, and do not only convince them of, but alſo perſwade them to a better belief.* M.

My Lord, your Lordſhip's both publick and private, Epiſcopal and Domeſtick vertues, make Irreligion aſham'd of its own principles, and do abundantly evince, that the Church of England, *in theſe latter ages, wherein vices ſeem to have over-run the whole world, has ſtill the means and vertues of the primitive time.*

Your Lordſhip *refus'd the higheſt dignities in the Church, with as much earneſtneſs as others court and follow them. Epiſcopacy, which uſually lays open thoſe defects, a private life had before happily conceal'd, did reveal in you all the qualities the* Apoſtles *and the ancient Canons require in a Biſhop: you have taken upon you all the burden, and left all the Splendor of ſo great a charge; and your Lordſhip rather ſuffers then enjoys the honours that are inſeparable from it.*

You give the Clergy of your Dioceſs, the example of a penitent and laborious life, of a conſtant ſelf

denial

denial of an indefatigable charity, of an even and unblamable converſation, of unſpeakable love to the ancient ſpirit of the Church, and of an uninterrupted reſidency and care of their Flocks; they verify in your Lordſhip, that famous ſaying of one of the greateſt Biſhops that ever was. Verus Amor recti habet in ſe Apoſtolorum Conſilia, & Apoſtolicas Sanctiones.

My Lord, *I had the happineſs to be for two years together witneſs of your Lordſhips holy life; when I was under your government in* Chriſts Church, *that magnificent Colledg.* Which the grandeur of its buildings, and amplitude of its revenues commend leſs then the gravity of its Canons, and the number, learning, vertue, and civility of its Students. *The Univerſity of* Oxford, *who know no equal out of this Kingdom, and is now, and has been for many hundred years together a ſeminary of great men both in Church and State;*

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owes to your Lorſhip the greateſt part of her ſplendor, you improve her buildings, increaſe her revenues; enlarge her libraries; encourage all arts and ſcience to flock to her as to their center, keep up the ſtrictneſs of her diſcipline, and the reverence due to her degrees.

I receiv'd there ſo many favours of your Lordſhip's, both in publick and private for the comfort of my ſoul, and the improvement of my ſtudies, that I ſhould be guilty of a moſt notorious ingratitude; if I did not let the World know how good and generous your Lordſhip has been to me. This is the end, my Lord of this Dedication; and I will think my weak endeavours abundantly rewarded, if I can perſwade the World that you have engag'd me to be as long as I live,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhips

moſt humble and

moſt obedient Servant;

H. C. de Luzancy.

Advertiſement.

THE *Reader muſt expect here no demonſtrations for Chriſtian Religion. This Treatiſe which is rather an eſſay then a book, ſuppoſes it not as demonſtrated, but only as probable as Irreligion ſeems to be to Irreligious Men. And that this may not ſeem to be ſaid at a venture, it is prov'd firſt, that Irreligion cannot be demonſtrated; But has only in the minds of its votaries a great degree of probability: ſo that Irreligion and Religion, are equally probable. And 2ly, that ſuppoſing Chriſtianity as probable, it is the greateſt madneſs in the World not to embrace it.*

This is the deſign of this Treatiſe, of which it may be ſaid, that the form is new, or at leaſt ſeems to be manag'd after ſuch a manner, as to leave no room to the ſlanderers of Chriſtianity, or prejudices to its adverſaries.

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A TREATISE Againſt Irreligion:

The Firſt Diſcourſe.

CHAP. I.

The eaſieſt way to bring an Irreligious man to believe, is to ſuppoſe his doubts.

THere are a ſort of men ſo affected concerning Chriſtian Religion, as neither to reject it as totally falſe, nor embrace it as undoubtedly

doubtedly true; but they hang between both, mov'd by the different impreſſions that Faith on the one ſide, and the Reaſons of Irreligion on the other, work in their minds. They owe to that confus'd mixture of opinions, that they are neither wholly Religious nor Irreligious. They perform the outward offices of Religion, doubting ſtill of what it propoſes to believe, to hope, and to fear; and leaving to their fate to decide what ſhall become of them after their death, they only mind now an eaſie and contented life.

Some have gone further; and doubting has ſo far prevail'd upon them, as to choak and ex-

extinguiſh in them the very leaſt ſpark of Faith. Either they own no other Divinity but Nature, as the *Atheiſts*, or admitting of a God, they deny Chriſt, as the *Deiſts*, and holding the World to be eternal, and the Soul mortal, cut off the conſequences attending the immortality of the Soul, *viz.* the laſt Judgment, Heaven, and Hell.

How different ſoever theſe two ſorts of men appear to us, yet it may be ſaid that their Errors flow from the ſame ſource, *viz.* an uncertainty and inſtability of mind, which exacts reaſons for every thing, and being ſatisfi'd with none, ſticks cloſe to the poſſeſſion of its

freedom. All the difference between them is, that the one carry their doubts ſo far as to become raſhly confident, and miſtake that for falſhood which is not demonſtrated, as they are pleas'd to fancy it ; whereas the others ſtill doubting, ſtill irreſolute, bring themſelves to a neutrality not a whit better than an open and profeſs'd impiety.

It is very often needleſs to make uſe of ſolid reaſons to cure them whom their prejudices arm and fence againſt all reaſons. They reject Scripture, laugh at Tradition, ſuſpect whatſoever is beyond the reach of a natural underſtanding, tho it be never ſo little ; and ſpoil-

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ing Faith of all the Authority it has over us, admit of no other principles but Reaſon, Experience, and the Teſtimony of their Senſes.

And ſo the ſtrongeſt Arguments that Religion claims, to remove or oppoſe Errours, being drawn from Scripture and Tradition, rejecting either of them, they think themſelves invincible, becauſe they ſhift till they cannot be ſpoken or fought withal.

It may be ſo far condeſcended with them, as to make uſe of neither; nay, as to lay aſide all the proofs Hiſtory, Philoſophy and Nature affords, and only ſtick to their doubts and uncertainties.

I ſay doubts and uncertainties; for if they have no demonſtration for Chriſtian Religion, they have none againſt it. The moſt learned in the myſteries of Irreligion, have not yet demonſtrated the Eternity of the World, the Mortality of the Soul, the Impoſſibility of a Judgment, and of an eternally happy or unhappy Life. All that they have done is to elude and evade the Arguments brought to aſſert them; all which ſumm'd up, amounts at moſt to a probable doubt, but can never reach to a full and real perſwaſion.

But the nature of doubt being to be equal on both ſides, they muſt give us leave to doubt

doubt of the Dogmes of Irreligion, as of things that may be falſe. Nor can they complain we require too much of them, when we deſire them to aſſent, That *it may be there is God*; *it may be our Soul is immortal*; *it may be the World had a beginning, and muſt have an end*; *it may be there is a Life to come.* The Authority of ſo many Nations that ador'd God for five thouſand years, and Chriſt near two thouſand, is enough to counterballance their reaſons, and make the queſtion at leaſt dubious and uncertain; and is ſo far from doing them any wrong, that their condition cannot be more advantageous than to ſuppoſe their doubts, and look upon them as principles

ciples that muſt end the difference.

Chap II.

That in things that are doubtful, 'tis an infallible Rule of Prudence, To cloſe with that Party where there is nothing to loſe, and much to gain. Application of that Rule to Chriſtianity.

SElf-intereſt is the part man is moſt tender of: all external conſiderations may move, but that only can perſwade and determine him to any thing; and ſince the time ſin brought him to take himſelf for his ultimate end, he loves nothing but him-

himſelf, or if he loves any thing beſides, 'tis ſtill for himſelf, and the advantages he hopes from it. The greater they are, and the nearer they come to him, the more he is affected with them. Thus, tho friends, riches, and all other external advantages ſway extreamly with him; yet their influence comes ſhort of that which his liberty, health, life, reputation, and generally all thoſe, wherein his happineſs is concern'd, have upon him. So that if ſuch advantage is ſet before his eyes, as not only concerns him for a while, or for a part of himſelf, but embraces whatſoever his body and ſoul can compaſs through the ſpace of his eternity, there is no

doubt

doubt he will earneſtly run to it. If in things of leſs importance, as are his friends, his liberty, or his life, he ſeems ſo concern'd; what muſt not be expected from him, when he is ſenſible, that from what is propos'd to him depends his eternal happineſs or miſery?

Upon that principle which no man can deny that has not diveſted nature, it is eaſie to raiſe another.

In the choice of Opinions, the truth and falſhood whereof cannot be certainly known, that Party is to be preferr'd, wherein you venture nothing if it be falſe, and win much if it be true; and that rejected wherein nothing is to be got,

if

if it be true, and the loſs irreparable, if it ſhould prove falſe.

There is no wiſe man but aſſents to this maxim. Thus men order their undertakings, and not truſting the event of things, or their own meaſures which often miſcarry, they work upon that which is more certain to them. Thus, of two Remedies that are to be try'd, that is never apply'd which muſt kill the Patient if it does not cure him, but rather that which if it reſtores him not to his firſt ſtrength, will at leaſt prove harmleſs. Thus there is no Merchant but would engage in a Commerce, which if ſucceſsful, there is much to be got, if not, nothing to be loſt; and

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he that ſhould leave ſuch a bargain for another, which if attended with all imaginable proſperity, there is nothing to be got, and if not, there is an inconceivable loſs to be ſuffer'd, would be lookt upon as bewitcht and befool'd.

Now let Chriſtianity and Irreligion be try'd by this Rule, ſince both are a ſort of Commerce, which every body is to meaſure by the riſque he runs, or the reward he hopes.

Laying aſide all the particular reaſons that evince the truth and excellency of Chriſtianity, let this ſuffice, that it is certain that following it, if it proves true, there is eternal happineſs to be expected, and nothing is

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ventur'd if it proves falſe. Whereas the contrary is to be ſaid of Irreligion.

The firſt part of this Aſſertion is ſo notorious, and ſo palpable, that it ſeems needleſs to prove it. So that there remains but the ſecond to be made out, that ſuppoſing Chriſtianity proves falſe, we venture nothing at all.

Chap.

CHAP. III.

That supposing Christianity proves false, we venture nothing at all.

ALL the loss Christianity exposes us to, is that of the inordinate pleasures and sensualities of this life, which he that has been made a Disciple of Christ at his Baptism, has promis'd to renounce. The Irreligious man can find no other risque but this; and all he can say is, that a Christian is oblig'd by his condition to deny himself, and forsake the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

But to unvail and cure this mistake, let us compare as exactly

actly as we can the Irreligious man and the Chriſtian, both in their deaths, and in their lives, and it will eaſily be ſeen who of them ventures moſt.

There is no other time wherein they may be compar'd; for after their death, both in the opinion of the Irreligious, are annihilated: and beſides that two annihilated beings cannot be compar'd, the non-being putting them in the ſame rank, it were impoſſible to judge of the difference of their lives by a ſtate which makes them equal after their death.

If then we look upon an Irreligious man, and a Chriſtian, when they are a-dying, we ſhall find them both ſo even con-

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cerning pleaſures or riches, and generally all that has paſt, that the one cannot claim the leaſt advantage over the other. I ſuppoſe that each of them liv'd a whole Age, with that difference, that the firſt enjoy'd without any interruption, and to the higheſt degree, all the pleaſures a long and happy life can afford; and the ſecond was depriv'd of all the delights the Law he obſerves prohibit to its Votaries. Nay, which is more, I ſuppoſe that he barr'd himſelf even from thoſe that are permitted, and ſtudied nothing all his life, but to hate and mortifie himſelf. Yet after all, it muſt be ſaid, that how vaſt a difference ſoever be ſeen between

tween them whilſt they live, they are perfectly even when they dye. The pleaſures of the Irreligious, and the ſufferings of the Chriſtian are equally gone. The voluptuous life of the firſt does not make him more happy; nor to have liv'd in torments a hundred years renders the ſecond more miſerable; the happineſs or miſery of the Soul conſiſting in what ſhe reſents now, and not in what ſhe reſented before.

If remembrance contributes any thing to our preſent happineſs or miſery, the Irreligious are certainly moſt miſerable. Death is his miſery, and the happineſs of the Chriſtian. It ends the pleaſures of the firſt and the

ſufferings of the ſecond. It is the comfort of them that pine away their lives in torment, and the deſpair of them that live jollily. The remembrance of an happy ſtate makes us to be in a moſt grievous puniſhment, and the abſence of thoſe delights we us'd our ſelves to, ſo galls us that it were better never to enjoy, or never to forſake them.

What then upon this ſuppoſition can a Chriſtian loſe that the Irreligious does not? It cannot be ſaid he has loſt all the pleaſures his Religion forbid him to enjoy, ſince 'tis evident this loſs is common to both, in that ſtate we conſider them. Or, to ſpeak more properly, the Irreli-

Irreligious is the only loſer, ſince the other cannot loſe thoſe pretended advantages he never poſſeſt.

However death raviſhes from the firſt all the vain felicity of his life. The Annihilation which he is ready to fall into, deprives him of the leaſt ſentiment of it; he is not nearer to happineſs then the Chriſtian: ſince both being ſuppos'd to be annihilated, they loſe equally all the conſequences of being, as pleaſures, happineſs and miſery.

This is the greateſt evil that can attend a Chriſtian ſuppoſing that his Religion ſhould prove falſe, to loſe as much as the Irreligious does. But the

Irreligious ſtands not upon ſo good terms; for what courſe ſoever things may take, if his opinion miſleads him not, he wins nothing; and if he comes to be deceiv'd his loſs muſt needs be infinite. It is evident that he gets nothing for the future, ſince he expects to be annihilated, which deſtroying his ſoul is the ruine of the hopes he could have entertain'd.

But if he chances to miſtake in the Ideas of things, he has fram'd to himſelf; if he finds when his body is dead that his ſoul cannot dye; but falls into the hands of the living God; if there is after this life an eternal happineſs of which he

he is for ever depriv'd, and a place of unſpeakable torments to which he is condemn'd, who can apprehend the greatneſs of the loſs he ſuſtains, and expreſs his madneſs, to engage in a party the lamentable end whereof is ſo evident.

And that which ſets off better the diſadvantage of Irreligion, is that the greateſt happineſs an Irreligious man can hope for in this belief, is to come to that point a Chriſtian looks upon as his greateſt infelicity. What is it that a Chriſtian fears moſt, but that after this life, there ſhould be no reward of his ſufferings, no God, no Spirits, no Heaven, nor himſelf? And yet this is the grand

reward impiety can expect; it is brought ſo low as to receive as a reward what a Chriſtian looks on as a puniſhment; he muſt wiſh for nothing after his death but a general Annihilation, and the mouth of the deep ſhut up upon him; for if he chances when he goes out of the World to find either God or himſelf, 'tis impoſſible to imagine a more miſerable Creature.

Chap.

CHAP. IV.

The Irreligious Man, and the Chriſtian compar'd in their lives.

HEre lies the ſtrength of the Irreligious, and it ſeems hard to convince him that he riſques more then a Chriſtian. A Chriſtian who ſticks religiouſly to his Law, muſt deny and offer himſelf a continual violence, he muſt ſet a Watch upon all his ſenſes to hinder them from betraying his heart; he muſt forgive his Enemies, oppoſe his own deſires, and confine his paſſions to the ſevere limits of a Divine Law

Whereas the Irreligious lets his heart, his ſenſes, his paſſions run their full carreer, he checks none of his deſires; and enjoys a felicity free from remorſe for the preſent, and not diſturb'd by the terrors of the time to come.

And when we inforce this Maxim of prudence *that in a doubtful caſe the ſureſt way muſt always be our choice*; he oppoſes that other to it, *that the certain is always to be prefer'd to the uncertain*; and the pleaſures of this life being certain, and the recompence of the next uncertain, it is a folly not to cleave to preſent things out of fear of imaginary, or at leaſt of uncertain puniſhment.

This

This is the Stumbling-block of the Irreligious, and the moſt ſpecious pretence of impiety, which may be ſo remov'd as to ſhew it ſhocks the very principles of natural reaſon.

1*ſt*. The ſuppoſition is alter'd, and Chriſtianity and Irreligion being both ſuppos'd as doubtful opinions, neither of which can be demonſtrated, how can they go under the notions of certainty or uncertainty?

2*ly*. Aſſurance being the natural effect of that which is certain, as hope of that which is uncertain, it muſt be ſaid in their own opinion that we have a full and entire aſſurance of the goods of this life, ſince they are real and certain, and only

hope

hope for those of the other, since they are expected and uncertain. And so the question is this, whether it be always wisely done to prefer those goods that we are sure we cannot miss, to those we have only a probable ground to hope, how vast a difference soever may be found between them. The falshood of this supposition is obvious, and might be a sufficient answer. But because it is not altogether exact; that the question may be stated in its natural terms, let us see what is wanting to to the certainty of the goods of this world, and what must be defalk'd from the uncertainty of those of the next.

First,

Firſt, The longeſt life in its full extent ſeldom reaches above 80 years, nor conſequently the pleaſures that attend it. Since he loſes them, and ceaſes to be happy, who ceaſes to live.

2*ly*, All our life is not capable of that happineſs. Old-age and Infancy muſt be excluded; nature muſt be endowed with a vigor Old-age has loſt, and Infancy has not yet attain'd: and ſo in comparing the goods of this life, to thoſe of the next, we muſt only reckon the time between theſe two ages. Staying upon theſe terms, the queſtion is this; whether a Wiſe man ought to prefer forty or fifty years of conſtant pleaſures to an eternity of

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happiness, which tho uncertain yet wants no rational grounds to be expected.

3*ly*, Health and Riches are absolutely necessary to enjoy that happiness which results from the possession of the creatures. Nay this necessity is so absolute that when separated, they cannot make the Irreligious happy. Take from him his health, and he will be a walking disease; he will languish and consume himself away. Restore him his health, and rob him of his riches, he will be a Beggar brought to the greatest want. What tast can the delights of this life have for poor and sickly people? They that need, are destitute of

means

means of coming to, they that abound, and are ſick, of ſtrength and deſire to enjoy them.

But Riches and Health, things ſo eſſential to his carnal felicity, are extreamly uncertain. No man can be ſecure of their poſſeſſion. That vaſt number of languiſhing people met withal every-where; Wounds, falls, Bankrupts, Sterilities, Shipwracks, Fires, Thefts, and a thouſand like misfortunes betray their inconſtancy, and teach us that nothing is ſo ruinous and uncertain as happineſs built upon them.

4*ly*, Suppoſing that a vigorous health, and a perfect plenty of all things ſhould conſpire to make you happy, how can you

you be ſecure of your happineſs, if your life it ſelf is not ſecure?

What is in the World more ſubject to alteration then our life? It depends upon the violence of men, or all the accidents of Fortune. We may dye in all ages, at every time, in every place; we cannot promiſe our ſelves one ſingle year, or one day, nay which is worſe, one ſingle hour. So many ſudden deaths ſet before our eyes are proofs againſt all exception, and what happens to ſome, threatens and is an argument of fear, for all. Our life is lent us by moments, and there is but that which is preſent we are really Maſters of. We cannot be

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ſure of any goods but of thoſe only which this ſingle moment affords; all the others are only grounded upon a probable hope. And to this is reduc'd that certainty ſo much boaſted of, of the pleaſures of the preſent life, to which this Maxim is ſtrangely miſapply'd, *that we muſt leave the uncertain for the certain*, and ſo the queſtion is this; Whether any man of ſenſe can reſolve to give over the hopes of eternal happineſs for a tranſitory one which is ſo often ruin'd by poverty and diſeaſes, and is ſecure of nothing but the moment of its enjoyment.

CHAP. V.

Limitation to be put to the uncertainty of the promiſes of Chriſtian Religion.

IT is to be weigh'd on the other ſide that the uncertainty of everlaſting happineſs a Chriſtian propoſes to himſelf is not of ſo large an extent as one may imagine. For tho we condeſcend ſo far as to ſuppoſe that it cannot be made certain by any internal principles; yet it has all the external certainty a rational man can deſire.

1*ſt*, The univerſal conſent of Mankind in all times and places. The moſt Barbarous agree

gree with the politeſt Nation, the *Turk*, and the *Scythian*, with the *Roman* and the *Greek*; and there is no irreligious perſon, but this propoſition muſt ſtagger, that it is impoſſible to produce ſince the origination of mankind, any Nations or Society of men that ever made profeſſion of Irreligion; Irreligious having been lookt upon in all ages as monſters, not only for the enormity of their Doctrine, but alſo for the ſmallneſs and ſtrangeneſs of their number.

2*ly*. For what relates particularly to Chriſtianity, who can deny that it compaſſes the Irreligious with a cloud of witneſſes? The blood of ſo many

thouſand Martyrs of all Ages, Sexes, Conditions, from the loweſt to the higheſt rank is an aſtoniſhing argument. And though ſome other Societies may challenge their Sufferers, yet the pains of our Martyrs are dignified by ſuch circumſtances as are to be found nowhere elſe but under the Goſpel.

And thus the Uncertainty of an eternal happineſs and miſery muſt not be lookt on as thoſe things we uſually call uncertain, and admit of equal probability for their not-being, as for their being, but as a thing, which though not evident in it ſelf, yet has a ſtrong eternal certainty.

Then

Then the question proposed is resolved to this, Whether any rational man must prefer a single moment of pleasure he enjoyes, to the hopes of an everlasting happiness, which though not evident in it self, yet is expected by all mankind, and so strongly believed by Christians that they have lost for it, their quiet, their Estates, their Thrones, their Lives.

Nor must the Irreligious say, That Christian Religion is false, or impossible. For then he argues against himself; and is out of power of Claiming for himself that the certain is to be preferred to the uncertain. If it be false or impossible, it is no more uncertain.

CHAP VI.

Reſolution of the queſtion, Whether the certainty of the goods of this Life can overpower the uncertainty of thoſe of the next. No Condition of men will aſſent to the choice of the Irreligious.

ALL thoſe neceſſary limitations being put on both ſides, it is eaſie to ſtate the queſtion in its natural terms. It runs thus, Whether a wiſe man ought to prefer advantages very ſhort in their greateſt extent, interrupted by Diſeaſes, Diſturb'd by thouſand unavoidable accidents, uncertain in their Duration, certain only for an inſtant;

instant; whether he ought to prefer them to the hope of an Eternal happiness, which so many millions of men have dyed for; and expose himself to an eternal misery which has the same probability? Whereas, without losing that blessed hope, and risking so Dreadful a danger, he may enjoy in an innocent life, a part of those Delights he haunts after in a sinful course.

The single proposal of this question is enough to have it resolved. Is there upon earth any man so bewitcht, and so out of his wits, as to doubt one single moment what must be his choice? Is it not a stupidity equal to that of Beasts them-

ſelves, to prefer pleaſures attended with ſo many defects, to the rational hopes of eternal happineſs, becauſe theſe are preſent, and that is yet to come?

But alas! Who ſhall make that impertinent choice? Men being different amongſt themſelves in age, condition, birth; the older they are, the proner they will be to catch at future happineſs; being ſo near their end that there remains for them but very little of the preſent. The ordinary ſort of people whoſe eſtate lies in their arms will think as old men. To them may be added all that live a laborious life, that is, almoſt all mankind.

I ask

I ask then an Irreligious perſon, what man is mad enough to ſide with him in his choice? If he is a Child, who knows yet nothing of another life, and very little of this, he muſt not be proud of it. A Child knows but what he has tried, and he has tried but few things. He cannot therefore compare thoſe objects which affect his ſenſes with thoſe his underſtanding apprehends not. And his judgement, though never ſo pertinent, will be ſtill that of a Child. If he is an old man in whom nature begins to decay, what would induce him to ſo ſtrange a choice? Does he think he ventures too much, when he parts with thoſe plea-

ſures he is not capable of, for a ſtate eternally happy, which though uncertain, yet is very probable? And would it not look as an incredible madneſs in him, that is dead to all the pleaſures of this life, ſhould he not renounce them, and chooſe thoſe of the next? If he is needy, and ſickly how can he determine himſelf to it? I leave it to any mans conſideration, whether he that far from ſwiming in wantonneſs has ſcarce time to live, had rather give over the hopes of eternal happineſs than to deprive himſelf of thoſe ſinful joyes, he never did, and never ſhall poſſeſs? And for them that lie under ſickneſs, let any wiſe man

judge

judge, whether he that has loſt the ſtrength both of his body and mind, and entertains no other commerce with men, but that which tends to his recovery, is to prefer that little he has left him, to the probable hopes of an endleſs felicity.

But why is the queſtion confined to three, or four ſorts of men? Let that choice be offered to all Trades-men, Plowmen, Merchants, Souldiers, Seamen, *&c.* Sure there is none ſo ſtupid as to prefer the hardſhips of their lives, to that eternity of happineſs Chriſtian Religion induces us to hope.

Irreligion therefore cannot be the Religion of thoſe men. It can admit none for its Vota-

ries

ries but young, rich, robuſt people, abundantly provided with all the eaſe, plenty and pleaſure this life can afford. No other condition is fit for it. Nay, they muſt be ſecure of perſevering in the ſhining flouriſhing ſtate they are: For ſhould any revolution ſpoile them of their Eſtates, any ſickneſs enfeeble their bodies, or if they live to old age, their very choice which they look'd upon before as rational, will appear to them fooliſh and extravagant.

Nay, they will not ſtay ſo long. Half a day is more than ſufficient to pull down the magnificent engine of their opinions. That which was true in the

the morning, whilſt they had their health, will be falſe, deceitful, erroneous, ridicule in the evening if they are wounded or dangerouſly ſick. And though they ſeem then unwilling to alter their mind, eitherout of obſtinacy or ſhame: yet they cannot perſevere in it without proclaiming themſelves fools. There remaining to them only ſome moments of life deprived of all pleaſure, and attended with torments, 'twere ridicule beyond what can be imagined to prefer them, how preſent and certain ſoever, to the hopes of eternity, how doubtful and diſtant ſoever it appears.

If

If then Religion is to be preferred to Irreligion when poverty, sickness, or old age fall upon us; Is Irreligion to be preferred to Religion, when Youth, Ease, Plenty and Health leave nothing to our desires to lust after? Is not truth the same in our young as in our old dayes? Is there a Religion for the Rich, and another for the Poor? Certainly the truth of those things, and much more that of God, depends not upon the alterations of our lives. It is still the same notwithstanding the different dispositions or opinions we are in.

Nor can Irreligion shelter it self in that vast number of Christians, who by falling into sin pre-

fer no leſs than they, the enjoyment of tranſitory things to the promiſes of the Goſpel. Though it may be confeſt with grief, that all that has been ſaid againſt the irreligious, may in ſome ſenſe be applied to them, yet there is an infinite difference between them. When Chriſtians fix their heart on tranſitory things, they do it not in conſequence of their belief. They acknowledge that they act contrary to their Principles. They accuſe and condemn themſelves. If they ſin therefore 'tis not out of any Irreligious principle, which perſwades them to prefer the preſent to the future, and what they enjoy to what they hope. In

their

their very ſins they believe ſtill the words of Chriſt, and truſt his Promiſes. But the corruption of their Nature overſways in them the Dictates of their Faith. An incomprehenſible weakneſs the firſt ſin left on them, renders them more eager after preſent things, though nothing comparable to the abſent. They are carried away through a violent paſſion which conceals the horror of ſin from the eyes of their ſouls, or truſts too much upon God's mercy.

What can hence the Irreligious conclude? unleſs it were this, that humane nature is depraved, and men act againſt their own principles, which

which shall be easily granted.

But considering this maxim in it self, and independently from the dispositions of particular men; does any thing evince more palpably that it is false, than the ordinary course of the world?

'There is no man but leaves a thousand times in his life the certain for the uncertain. A merchant ventures his mony which is certain against a very uncertain gain. A Conqueror ventures that peace he enjoyes at home, against a very doubtful success. A Plowman, a Souldier, a Pilot venture what they have against probable hopes of getting more. Nay upon this Maxim, *Of leaving the certain*

certain for the uncertain, turns all the commerce of mankind, since they disturb their quiet, which is the thing they are most secure of, to come to what they pretend, which is full of uncertainty.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The true Notion of this Maxim of St. Auſtin, Tene certum, Dimitte incertum.

FRom all that has been ſaid, it is eaſie to conclude the falſhood of that maxim, that the certain is to be preferred to the uncertain. Now to judge how far it may be true, we need conſider but this: that when we are irreſolute, 'tis alwaies either upon the ends we propoſe our ſelves, or the means to attain them. From whence theſe three Propoſitions fall naturally.

1*ſt*. When we are agreed upon the end, and only doubt which means are ſureſt to attain it, 'tis the greateſt madneſs in the world to leave the certain for the uncertain; to part from a way which leads infallibly to Heaven, and engage in another which perhaps may end in Hell. And this Principle proclaims the madneſs of the new Doctrine of Probability, that Monſter brought up by the Jeſuits for the total extinction of the ſmall remains of Chriſtianity in the world. For ſince all Chriſtians agree upon the end they aſpire to, and which is more upon the means Chriſt has given us in the Goſpel, what is there

there more void of ſenſe than to leave them, for by-wayes, *unknown, and untrodden paths.*

2*ly.* When the end is not agreed upon, and that our mind is at a loſs, upon which to faſten it ſelf, it is to be examined whether thoſe ends are equally advantagious to us; as whether the gain exceeds conſiderably the venture: and then the certain is infallibly to be preferred to the uncertain. 'Twere indeed an inconceivable madneſs to venture an advantage quietly poſſeſt, againſt another of equal worth, but uncertain. All the reward of your labour, if you ſucceed, is to be in the ſame ſtate that you were in before; and if you miſs, to loſe

both what you poſſeſs and what you hope.

This is the caſe of the Duelliſts, who venture their lives that they may get a name. They loſe their life which is the greateſt of natural goods, to win an imaginary glory; which becomes after their death a real infamy to all ſubſequent ages.

3*ly*. If the end we pretend to are odds, and the good we hope conſiderably greater than that we poſſeſs already, the firſt though uncertain, is to be preferred to the other. Becauſe all things impartially weighed, the greatneſs of the good you hope, is a greater advantage than the certainty of the

the ſmall good you poſſeſs. You hope indeed with uncertainty, but that uncertainty is the foundation of your hope, and ſufficiently rewarded by the greatneſs of what you expect.

'Tis upon that account that Merchants venture a little for a conſiderable gain though very doubtful. A Souldier and a Seaman expoſe their lives to the end that they may paſs the reſt of their daies more comfortably, though they cannot be ſecure of the length of their life, nor of a gain which a thouſand perils upon Sea and Land ſeem to obſtruct. They ſacrifice the preſent time to that which is to come: thing s that are certain to thoſe tha t

are doubtful, and look upon that comfortable living they promiſe themſelves one day as a greater happineſs than the quiet poſſeſſion of their life, with all the troubles and pains that attend it.

Should the happineſs of the next life exceed this only of ſome Ages, or Degrees, there were ground enough to a wiſe-man to prefer the firſt to the ſecond. Nor is there any man of ſenſe, but would reſign up an age of ordinary happineſs, and ſuch as the world conceives it, upon hopes of a reign of a thouſand years, and a life infinitely happy.

But is there no proportion between theſe two ſorts of Goods;

Goods; if that maxim be falſe that the certain is to be preferred to the uncertain when the advantages are not equal: how much more when the one is finite, and the other infinite; the uncertain you expect infinitely more durable and perfect, than the certain you venture.

And this is the juſt idea we muſt form our ſelves of this and of the next life. What proportion is there between the pleaſures of this world and the happineſs of Heaven? What compariſon between joyes ſo limited in their Nature, in their Duration, in their Extent, and thoſe unſpeakable ones, the eye has never ſeen

becauſe they are not Colours, nor the Ear heard becauſe they are not Sounds, nor have entred into the heart of man, becauſe it is too narrow for them? What equality can there be found between the poſſeſſion of the whole earth it ſelf, and that of all the riches of God? Between the dark, heavy, paſſible ſtate of our bodys, and the bleſſed ſtate of immortality, and ſpirituality, wherein the reſurrection of Chriſt ſhall inſtate them? Certainly the Diſtance is greater than that of Atom to the Univerſe.

Auguſt. Ep. 118.

And muſt the Irreligious be afraid of venturing that finite good, that Atom, that Nothing

thing againſt an infinite Being? Muſt he not be aſhamed of claiming here the right of preferring things that are certain, to them that are not? he who in the way, a hunting, on his travels, at play and in his commerce diſclaims it ſo openly? He ventures in all theſe things, with this difference, that there is ſtill ſome proportion in his riſque, and gain both of them being finite, whereas there is none between this life and eternity.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Concluſion of this Diſcourſe.

LEt the Impious then extend ſo far as he pleaſes the greatneſs of his ſinful joyes. Let him live to the age of *Mathuſelem* without the leaſt cloud or mixture of infelicity, yet he cannot deny that this long contexture of years and happineſs is ſtill finite. He muſt needs conſeſs that an uncertain good is to be preferred to any other when it is infinite. The uncertainty of it not debarring us from our hopes, and the laſt degree of hope of an infinite happineſs far ſurpaſſing the enjoy

joyment of a tranſitory one. All the venture is to loſe thoſe tranſitory Goods, which loſs being already inevitable, cannot be parallel'd with an happineſs incapable of diminution.

I ſee no anſwer to this, except that eternal happineſs and miſery are Ideas ſubſiſting no where but in the fancies of Chriſtians, which is the more irrational, becauſe as long as they cannot convince their Religion of falſhood and impoſſibility, but ſtill doubts, and ſtill reaſons, all the foregoing ratiocination remains in its entire force againſt him.

This only may be added, that this is the conformity between a Chriſtian and an Irreligious

gious man, that the firſt believes, and acts contrary to his belief, and the ſecond doubts, and acts contrary to his doubts. Of the one it is too too manifeſt. The other talks as if he were certain, and thinks, and droops, without ever being able to fix himſelf. When he ſpeaks of Religion he is confident that it is altogether falſe, and impoſſible; and when he reaſons, he finds himſelf expoſed to a bottomleſs Sea of doubts and uncertainties.

The

THE
Second Diſcourſe.

The removal of ſome Objections againſt Chriſtian Religion.

IT is not intended here to prove the truth of Chriſtian Religion, this having been already done by great men, with a ſucceſs anſwerable to their expectation; but only to remove ſome of the moſt ſubſtantial Objections of the Irreligious, whereby Chriſtian Religion is evinced to be at leaſt moſt probable. They may

may be reduc'd to theſe three heads. *The ſeeming lowneſs of the myſteries Chriſtian Religion obliges us to believe. The incomprehenſibility of our Doctrine. The impoſſibility of thoſe Miracles we look upon as the foundation of our Faith.*

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

The Lowneſs and Deſpicableneſs of our Myſteries anſwered.

THis reproach is not peculiar to the Irreligious. The *Jews* before them had lookt upon the death of Chriſt as a ſtumbling block, and the Heathens as a fooliſhneſs. *Marcio* and *Valentinus*, as *Tertullian* relates it, did teach that Chriſt had aſſumed an imaginary body, and his Birth and Death were only illuſions put upon the eyes of the Spectators. *Apelles* would have him covered with a real fleſh, but borrowed from the Stars, and not from the

the Bleſſed Virgin. Thus man would have ordered the grand myſterie of Incarnation, had he been Maſter of it. He would have left the bare diſpoſition to God; as if he could or ſhould do nothing elſe but what man is able to think.

The occaſion of thoſe Dreams of the Hereticks, was that they believed Chriſt's humiliations unworthy of him; and the ground of the Irreligious men is that they believe they are unworthy of themſelves. Both are as different in their conſequences as in their principles. The firſt concluded that he had no real body, nor had really ſuffered. The ſecond from the birth and death

of

of Chriſt inferred that he was no God. The aim of both is to ſeparate ſufferings from God, as things altogether irreconcilable. The Irreligious deſtroy the Divinity of Chriſt, and receive his humiliations; The Hereticks deny his humiliations to preſerve his Divinity. Chriſtians unite them both in the perſon of Chriſt; acknowledging that though God, as his Father; yet he is become lower than the Angels, taking upon him our nature; and lower than men, ſuffering for them a moſt cruel and ſhameful death.

Suppoſing then as a Principle that Chriſt is God, it is no hard task to prove that his hu-

miliations are ſo far from taking away the belief of his Divinity, that they enforce and ſupport it. Let them be propoſed to any man of ſenſe, and he will conclude:

1*ſt*. That his humiliations can bring no alteration to his Divinity; God being wholly immutable and incapable of decay, to what ſtate ſoever he is pleaſed to deſcend.

Tertul. de carn. Chriſt. *Periculum ſtatus ſui Deo nullum eſt.*

2*ly*. That if he took upon him the vile and deſpicable form of a man, 'twas becauſe he would have it ſo. He could have come inveſted with all the majeſty expected from the Son of God. His reſurrection, his aſcenſion,

aſcenſion, his ſitting at the right hand of his Father, are myſteries as full of Glory, as the others are of ſhame. He is inſtated by them in that ſplendid appearance the Irreligious and Jews would have him in at the beginning. So that his humiliations cannot be attributed to any want of power.

Nor dares the Irreligious deny theſe glorious Myſteries; unleſs he reſolves to yield up thoſe he looks upon as ſo ſhameful. Knowing nothing of either of thoſe but from the relation of the Evangeliſts, he muſt equally receive, or reject the whole matter of fact.

3*ly*. That he did it becauſe he would do it, and that he would do it becauſe he loved us. *He loved man in his miſeries and infirmities; and who can turn into a crime ſo ſtupendious, ſo miraculous a charity?* *Tertull. ib.*

4*ly*. That nothing is really low or ſhameful but what bears the character of ſin. The Greatneſs of God ſhines in the number, order and motion of the Heavens. Nor does he fall from his Majeſty, when he applies his power to the formation of the vileſt inſects. His providence maintains them; His immenſity renders him preſent in the horrideſt places. Nor did yet any man think all

theſe

theſe things a ſhame and a reproach to him. Yet almighty God is as really in them after his manner, as Chriſt in his myſteries of Humiliation.

CHAP. II.

Christian Religion obliges us to believe impossibilities, and things beyond the reach of nature: Answer.

THat nothing is to be believed but what is seen is ridiculous in the very doctrine of Irreligion, whose abetters believe many things they never saw. Who of them denies *Antipodes*, though they never were there? Who of them refuses the testimony of facts related by prophane Historians, because they never saw the like? Who of them disbelieves many things he has been told, be-

because some of them proved false, and makes his private opinion the rule of what is credible, and possible?

But it is demonstrable the Irreligious can deny none of those miracles which are obvious in the Scripture. There are but two wayes of disproving miracles. First, shewing their impossibility. Secondly, Their want of Authority. It is altogether out of their power to prove the first.

A miracle is either impossible as being beyond the force of nature. If he thinks them impossible in that sense, so far we agree. Or it is impossible to God, and this he cannot assert according to his own prin-

ciples. Or impoſſible in it ſelf, and this cannot be made out, but by demonſtrating a real, certain, evident contradiction in them.

And if we conſider things in themſelves, what impoſſibility is there, that a ſoul, and body, which were united a little before ſhould join again, and be in the ſame ſtate they were before their ſeparation, if there is a power capable of uniting them? What contradiction is there that a blind man ſhould receive his ſight; a dumb man his ſpeech; a Paralytick his limbs? Nature doing it often with time and remedies, why cannot a ſuperiour power do it in a moment?

For

For the ſecond, *viz.* Want of authority, no Irreligious ſure will charge them with. Beſides the integrity of them that tranſmitted them to us; Beſides their principle that no lye was lawful, but that a lye in matter of Religion was deteſtable; they ſay nothing but what they have been eye-witneſſes of. Some of thoſe miracles have been believed for three thouſand years; and preſerved by a people that has built their Religion upon them. The reſt have been believed ſixteen hundred years ſince, and contributed to the converſion of all the nations of the Earth. Their Preachers ſealed them with their blood; wrought the ſame,

if not greater, and induced by them an infinite number of people of all Ages and Conditions to dye for the truth of the Goſpel.

'Tis matter of fact that before Chriſtian Religion was brought into the world, all Nations, the Jews excepted, were Idolaters. It is another matter of fact, that thoſe Idolaters changed Religion, and from Infidels became Chriſtians. And what greater proof than this can be required for the authority of miracles? how could ſuch a ſudden alteration be ſeen in the world without an infinite number of wonders which backt and ſupported the Goſpel? Were ſo many millions of men meer

children

children, whose mind was altered at first sight? Were they so stupid and simple as to receive any new Doctrine, without discernment and upon trust? Is not the History full of the strange excesses Nations ran to, to defend those errors the Disciples of Christ would remove from them? Could they be overcome after so long, so stout a resistance by any other force than that of miracles? Do not the violent and lasting persecutions of the Primitive Church, evince that they were of a Religion contrary to ours? How could twelve Fishermen agree upon so strange a resolution, as that of delivering lyes to all the world, and be so obstinate

ſtinate as no torments could perſwade them to deſiſt from their fooliſh undertaking? How could ſo many Nations aſſent to lies, which procured nothing to their defenders but death and ſufferings? How could they venture their lives to maintain and tranſmit them to us by a conſtant and uninterrupted tradition? Certainly one ſhould convince us firſt, that all thoſe Nations were naturally mad, and apt to prefer a ſevere law which extends its empire to the very deſires of the heart, and has for its Promulgators men unknown and perſecuted every where, to their firſt Religion which put no limits to their cupidity. And before any body

ſhould

should embrace Irreligion, the Irreligious is concerned to prove by solid arguments that those changes are naturally possible; and the more because they are so particular to Christianity as to be found no-where else.

CHAP.

Chap. III.

The incomprehensibility of things Christian Religion obliges us to believe, answered. The injustice and absurdity of that reproach.

THe Irreligious complains many points are proposed to his belief which it is impossible for him to understand; as if nothing was to be believed but what falls under his senses. Which reproach may be reduced to these two Propositions: *That nothing is to be believed, but what may be comprehended*, and *that things are not when they are incomprehensible.* Then which two propositions nothing can be

be imagined more impertinent.

Beſides that thereby a weak, frail, blind man makes his private underſtanding the rule of all things; is it not palpable that we cannot comprehend thoſe very things which are moſt obvious? And thus muſt we believe nothing that we ſee, hear, touch, ſmell and taſt, ſince we cannot comprehend any of thoſe things; he being only ſaid to comprehend *that can know the ſecret cauſes of thoſe effects which affect our ſenſes; make out the internal principles which compoſe all bodies, and tell us what are the differences that diſtinguiſh beings amongſt themſelves*; which no man living can do, not only in remote,

remote, but even in the moſt ordinary things.

Nay the incomprehenſibility of our myſteries is ſo far from taking away any part of their credibility, that it renders them more credible. The moſt natural conſequence that can be drawn from the exiſtence of God, is that he is incomprehenſible. Were he not ſo, the concluſion is evident, *therefore he is not.* Suppoſing then that there is a God, he muſt be infinite and omnipotent. But were he comprehenſible, his infinity and omnipotence were meer contradictions. It is the eſſential character of his Nature, that neither his eſſence, nor great works can be known.

know. Should I doubt of theſe two qualities Religion teaches me he has, the nearest way to have it cleared up, would be to examine the effects attributed to him. If they did not ſurpaſs my underſtanding I ſhould ſuſpect, and deny them. But were they incomprehenſible to any humane apprehenſion, it would be an infallible ſign of their certainty.

I look then upon the works faith aſcribes to God. I read that he has made the world with nothing; that he has imprinted in the Skies, and Stars, a motion, that would be eternal, were it not ſtopt by the ſame hand as formed it: that he has united without mixture

or confuſion Divine nature to the Humane in the perſon of Chriſt: that this θεανθρωπος raiſed himſelf from the dead, and will raiſe alſo all men: Thoſe miracles ſurpaſſing infinitely the reach of my underſtanding, I conclude they become him who is omnipotent and infinite.

There is no anſwer can be given to this, except one ſhould prove that incomprehenſibility is not the conſequence of an infinite being, which is notoriouſly abſurd. What is then the ſhift the Irreligious recourſe to? He ſtares at the word *incomprehenſible* and concludes there is no God. That is, he makes uſe of the propriety of a being

a being to deſtroy the being it ſelf; he denies him by that which proves moſt convincingly that he is. He is incomprehenſible, therefore he is not. This is the height of abſurdity. I ſhould as well conclude that man is not rational, becauſe he reaſons, and found out Arts and Sciences.

But incomprehenſibility being relative to our humane apprehenſion, whoſe bounds are too narrow to apprehend God, who does not ſee, that to reject the belief of his being, and myſteries upon his being incomprehenſible, is to make ignorance and darkneſs a ſhield againſt Religion. An abſurdity equal to that of him who

would not believe the Sun ſhines at noon, becauſe his eyes are too weak to look upon him ſtedfaſtly.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Irreligious in his principles cannot avoid to believe incomprehenſible things.

IT is now an eaſie thing to ſee how unjuſtly the Irreligious refuſes to believe ſupernatural things, who is forc't to admit of natural that are no leſs evident, and incomprehenſible to him. And thus when he endeavors to anſwer the greateſt evidence according to his own principles, or elude miracles the fact whereof he cannot deny, he falls into ſuch abſurdities, as exact from him as hard a be-

lief as the faith of Chriſtians.

He cannot but ſee that the world, and all the beings it includes, keep ſtill the ſame order. The viciſſitude of daies and ſeaſons, the conſtant ſucceſſion of generations whereby the world is preſerved, and renewed, is ſtill the ſame. The very firſt thoughts that ſuch a ſpectacle gives him is to know what has been, or will be its duration; That is, whether it had a beginning or ſhall have an end.

A Chriſtian faſtning his knowledge upon Scripture, believes that God created the world, and ſhall deſtroy it in that time only known to him. And when he has askt, how ſuch a thing would be done, he

he acknowledges it is inconceivable, *tota ratio facti eſt potentia facientis.* *Auguſt. Ep. ad Jan.*

The Irreligious of the other ſide not being able to apprehend how God could have framed ſo many vaſt bodies with nothing, had rather believe that the world ever was, and will ever be as it is. And ſo to avoid the creation which he cannot conceive, he believes rather the eternity of the world which ſuppoſes it never was created.

Now let any body compare theſe two beliefs. Is the eternity of the world eaſier to comprehend than its creation? Is it harder to believe that God

by his infinite power created all beings, than that they did alwaies ſubſiſt without either author or dependency? Is there light and conviction enough in the opinion of the eternity of the world, to venture upon its eternal torments which the denial of the creation engages us to? All the favour an Irreligious man can expect, is that they are both incomprehenſible. If we cannot know how one ſingle grain of Sand has been made of nothing; much leſs can we conceive a chain of Years, Ages and Generations, which being limited of one ſide, is ſo infinite of the other, that the firſt link is not to be found.

Reaſon

Reaſon therefore being blind on both ſides, authority alone can incline our minds to one, or to the other. But in this alſo Chriſtian Religion claims all the advantage.

The Doctrine of the creation of the world has been tranſmitted to us by *Moſes*, that is, by the ancienteſt of all Writers, as living not long after thoſe Patriarchs whoſe names came down to us. That tradition was preſerved amongſt the Jews; then amongſt the Chriſtians down to us, and will laſt to the end of the world. It was received by the Heathens themſelves. Moſt of the Platoniſts underſtood their Maſter in that ſenſe, and they who did not,

but

but only believe that matter was eternal, did confeſs that the world in its being and preſervation depended from an eternal and independent cauſe. They admitted of the ancient Chaos wherein all the Elements had been mixt and confuſed; the ſeparation whereof they attributed to the ſame agent who ordered them as we ſee.

Some Philoſophers knowing nothing of it, brought up the eternity of the world, and that upon very weak conjectures. The Diſciples of *Ariſtotle* embrac'd it rather, than confeſs it had been created. And inundations, fires, plagues, tranſportations of Nations, and above all the Αποθέωσις of Kings and

and the deep ignorance that attended Idolatry defaced the very remains of that tradition. It was the constant opinion of some Nations that the world was eternal.

Hence fair play was given to their pride that disputed antiquity. They imagined that to be the ancientest, which gave them right to look upon the rest as younger Brothers. The *Egyptians* and the *Ethiopians* claimed that honour, and declared that they came immediately from the womb of the earth. And the *Athenians* took the proud title of Αὐτόχθονες.

But the *Chaldæans* and *Egyptians* carried their Dispute to the very height. The first, as refer

fer *Diodorus*, and *Tully*, who laugh at both, ſaid that when *Alexander* the Great over-run *Aſia*, they had already applied themſelves to the ſtudy of the Stars juſt four hundred ſeventy thouſand years. And not reckoning their years by the reign of their Kings, but divers periods, ſome of ſix thouſand, others of ſix hundred, the leaſt of ſixty years they made up their account. The *Egyptians* wanted no number to outvie them. They found in their *Archives*, that ſince they had the name of *Egyptians*, the Stars had already compleated four times their great revolution, that is, returned to the ſame ſtate where

they

they were when they began to move: which includes an incredible number of years. Being as proud of Aſtrology as the *Caldæans*, they boaſted to have kept the *Ephemerides* of an infinite number of years, and the lives of their Kings all that time. An Author of theirs relates three branches of them. One of Gods, the other of Heroes, the third of men, who reigned an infinite number of ages. Nay they were ſo thirſty of antiquity as to ſay that *Vulcan* their firſt King reigned innumerable ages. But the *Annals* of his reign were loſt. The Sun ſucceeded to him as being his Son, and reigned ſix hundred thouſand, ſix hundred

dred ſeventy four years.

May it not be askt whether the brain of them that made ſuch reckoning, or of them that believed them was well ſettled? and yet this is the ground of the belief of the Irreligious. Thoſe Dreams are all the ſhelter they can find, if they go to prove the authority of the world by way of authority.

They agree therefore with Chriſtians in that they believe incomprehenſible things. But with this difference, that we believe only upon the authority of God who has revealed them. We are perſwaded that his power goes farther than our apprehenſion. And that he includes

cludes within, and works without himſelf greater wonders than we are able to conceive. And as it is alwaies rational to truſt him who is infinitely wiſe, ſo reaſon it ſelf forces us to believe things beyond reaſon.

This impotency of conceiving the works of God is the only thing can make us happy. What ſort of God is this that can be included in the narrow minds of men? Certainly an object of this nature is a ſlender ground of felicity. And our hopes being inſeparable from our faith, his incomprehenſibility is the greateſt comfort of our ſouls.

This Irreligious will admit of nothing but what his ſenſes

ſes or his experience make plain to him. When therefore they believe any thing they neither ſee nor apprehend; their belief is not grounded upon the certainty or evidence, but the intereſt they have in things. It is not the object that determines and fixes their belief, but their heart and inclinarions. They believe that ſuch a thing is after ſuch a manner, becauſe they know it, and are ſatisfied, but becauſe they would have it ſo. Nay, they carry ſo far that abuſe of their reaſon, that when they cannot avoid to believe things morally incredible, they had rather believe them incredible by their groſs abſurdity, than any divine grandure that lies in them. Theſe

These are the miserable shifts of the Irreligious. But if they could stay there, and feed themselves with the imaginations of their hearts without any danger, we had nothing to say to them. All wise men would only think them out of their wits; and so far 'tis well 'tis no worse. But to believe impertinencies and Chimera's with that danger, that if they mistake, they shall fall into an eternal state of misery; 'tis a fury, a passion, an extravagancy that wants a name, and can scarce be imagined.

Chap. V.

Abuſe the Irreligious makes againſt the Immortality of the ſoul of the conformity between man and beaſt.

It is not intended here to prove the immortality of the ſoul; but only to ſhew how falſe and inconſiſtent are the principles of Irreligion. There is a vaſt conformity between man and beaſt, in their ſenſes, in the multiplication of their kinds, their ſelf-preſervation, their paſſions, their diſtempers, their death, *&c.* From the mortality of the ſouls of beaſts the Irreligious concludes

cludes that of the ſoul of man, and thinks in that to judge according to the natural impreſſion that form in his mind ſo many qualities, which being common to both make a ſort of *prejuge* againſt man.

To evince how falſe is that ratiocination, it may ſuffice to prove that it is no leſs againſt, than for him. He concludes from that conformity, that as theſe of beaſts, ſo our ſouls die. Why not that theirs are immortal as well as ours? The conformity being equal to both ſides, it muſt not be more partial to one than to the other. According to all appearances, ſaies the Irreligious, Man, Beaſt, are altogether alike, in the neceſ-

ſity of dying, and in all the conſequences of death. But the whole beaſt dies body and ſoul, therefore the whole man dies ſo alſo.

But the very ſelf ſame argument may be thus as probably inverted. Beaſts and man are are alike in their death: But man dies in his body and not in his ſoul; therefore Beaſts do ſo too, and their ſouls are immortal. Either of theſe concluſions muſt be equal to the Irreligious: ſince profeſſing to believe but what he knowes; he knowes, and can know the mortality of the ſouls of Beaſts no better than their immortality.

But

But Chriſtians, ſaies he, acknowledge the whole Beaſt dies. Which anſwer is the more abſurd becauſe he muſt not argue from what we believe, but only from what falls under his ſenſes and experience, and what he muſt thence rationally conclude. But he ſees only in a Beaſt the death of the body. His eyes can go no further, and concludes from that internal equality any thing for their ſoul. Or leaving the anſwer in its full latitude; 'tis in vain he makes uſe of our authority concerning the deſtruction of the ſouls of beaſts, ſince we do it by reaſons which eſtabliſh the immortality of ours.

But ſuppoſing with them and all the world beſides the mortality of the ſouls of Beaſts; all that can be concluded from their conformity with man, can only fall upon that wherein they are alike.

There is in man that which is rational, and that which is animal. Man is born, preſerves himſelf by nouriſhment, and his kind by generation. He is ſubject to the diſtempers of his body, the paſſions of his heart, the diſorders of the Elements, and the neceſſity of dying. All this is common to him, and the ſmalleſt Beaſts. Nay many of them out-do him in the perfection of his ſenſes. Their light is more piercing,

their

their hearing quicker, their ſmelling more refined. But all this is ſtill animal. All thoſe reſemblances exaggerated with the greateſt care, extend not to the rational, which is his grand difference. And ſo all that can be inferred hence is, that he dies in all that is beaſtly in him: in his body; in his ſenſitive life; in all the faculties and operations that depend from corporeal Organs. But what is all this to the deſtruction of his ſoul, which depends upon thoſe Organs, neither in his being, nor his operations.

Who can hear without indignation this manner of arguing? Man is like beaſt in that which

is common to both; Therefore in all that is peculiar to him. Beaſts die in their bodies, in that ſenſitive life which conſtitute the beaſt, ſo does man; therefore he dies in that rational intellectual life which is proper to him. Man dies in his body, therefore in his ſoul. The Sun ſhines not when it is Ecclipſed; therefore he ſhines not at all.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Conformity between Man and Beaſt.

THE conformity between man and beaſt is three-fold; the firſt natural and neceſſary, the ſecond ſhameful, the third laborious.

The firſt is the conſequence of an animal life. Man and beaſt agree in eating, drinking, ſleeping, *&c.* And although this ſtate be imperfect, as ſuppoſing many wants, yet there is neither ſhame nor pain for man. He does in that nothing againſt his reaſon, which is one part of his nature, and it is agreeable to the body which

which is the other. This conformity is inſeparable from man in this world. Nor is the ſtate of innocence it ſelf free from it.

The ſecond is the conſequence and puniſhment of ſin. It conſiſts in the reign of our paſſions over us; the diſorders of body and ſenſes which rebell againſt the law of the mind, and in all the ſhare luſt claims in the propagation of nature. This ſtate is natural to beaſts, and ſhameful to man, becauſe he is a ſtranger to it. 'Tis a ſhame for him, that paſſions ſhould command, when reaſon muſt give laws: that he ſhould not maſter his own ſenſes: that he ſhould covet what

is

is not his own; and love what he is convinced he ſhould not; nay ſometimes that which he would not love.

Man is naturally no leſs ſtranger to the third, than to the ſecond: So many labours incident to his life, ſo many ſufferings and diſtempers that end but with him, cannot naturally fall upon an innocent creature. He muſt have been guilty to be afflicted.

Nor can the Irreligious inſtance the ſufferings of beaſts, who are innocent after their manner. Why muſt man the moſt excellent creature upon earth, who was to command beaſts, be twice more miſerable than they. Firſt in the

multi-

multitude and diverſity of his pains, which come from the infimite number of his wants. Secondly, The quicker and more galling ſentiments of his pains. Beaſts are afflicted with no evil but the preſent. Man fears beſides, and foreſees the future. He who is condemned to die, dies a thouſand times before his execution. He feels infamy which outvies any grief. And by the help of memory is galled at the privation of a ſtate, the happineſs whereof he knowes moſt exactly, and deſires moſt earneſtly.

Beaſts are incapable of any of thoſe pains, and nothing but a cauſe ſtranger to mans nature, ſuch as is ſin, could have ſub-

subjected him to them. Sin alone could let into the world wars, distempers and death. And God could not punish the pride of man with greater justice, than to make him so like beasts in sensible things, as they seem even to obscure the immortality of his nature.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The difference between Man and Beaſt.

THE chief difference between Man and Beaſt, is reaſon; which comprehends memory of things that are paſt, and foreſight of thoſe that are to come.

Hence ariſes ſpeech, which is not only proper to man, but a general means to communicate thoughts, covering them with ſuch ſounds that men applied their notions to. Speech is divided into all ſorts of Languages, nor is there any Nation

on but makes uſe of it to keep up civil ſociety.

Hence ariſe alſo Sciences, Arts, Commerce, Societies and Kingdoms.

The ſecond is liberty, an indifference of doing and not doing what he pleaſes: Whereas beaſts are determined in all their actions by a predominant inſtinct, they cannot reſiſt.

Hence ariſe Laws to ſecure private men, and promote publick intereſt; which are grounded only upon liberty, there being no room for them in a nature determined to the ſame thing.

Hence alſo ariſe vertues, which reſult from the good uſe of liberty and obedience to the Laws. Nay

Nay man is discernable by his vices. The love of Glory, and the desire of Commanding distinguishes us from beasts, though our condition be not a jot the better for it; *since all desires not overswayed by reason render us more miserable, and misery is never an argument to raise our selves above any other.*

Augusti.

Now the question is, whether besides so many palpable differences, there is not yet some other invisible that distinguishes man in his duration.

1*st*. To consider the thing it self, it is already very possible that amongst so many external differences there is some internal unknown to us. There is great

great probability that ſouls ſo contrary in all things are ſo too in their duration, and in their eſſence. How could man do things ſo far beyond the reach and capacity of beaſts, were not his nature nobler and perfecter than theirs. This ſuppoſition is very probable.

2*ly*. If we ſurvey attentively all the advantages of man above beaſts, they do all imply a natural tendency to immortality.

The nature of the ſoul is ſpiritual. This appears from her thoughts, which repreſent to her ſpiritual objects, and from general ideas from private images of things. But if the being of the ſoul be ſpi-

ritual, it is alſo immortal. Since a being totally independent from matter; is ſubject to no alteration.

3*ly*. If we examine reaſon, which is the character of the ſoul, it is bound within no compaſs of time. By the help of memory and foreſight nothing is future or paſt to man. Memory recalls precedent ages: foreſight ſets before our eyes events that are to come. Reaſon enacts laws to order matters of men, if 'twere poſſible, for ever. Books ſhall teach poſterity as long as men live. Dying people intend by their laſt will to diſpoſe to all future ages of the goods that are in their power. There is

no

no man but deſires eternal life and happineſs. None but fears infamy after his death. Nay, thoſe very men wiſh for immortality who deſire their ſouls to be immortal.

Are not theſe prejudices ſtrong enough to move any man? We have a clear notion of immortality. Our mind foreſees, our heart wiſhes for, every body aſpires to it. It is therefore at leaſt to be concluded in the number of poſſible things. And the contrary opinion cannot be received, unleſs it brings along with it an evidence equal to that, of having ſeen a ſoul annihilated, which never happened and never ſhall.

Our eyes, saies the Irreligious, are not witnesses of the souls immortality. It is true. But are they of her destruction? Is not either of them equally unattainable to our senses? What can then determine him rather to the belief of one, than of the other, since both are equally unknown to him?

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Some places of Eccleſiaſtes *Irreligious men make uſe of to prove the mortality of the ſoul, explained.*

NOthing ſurpriſes more than to ſee the Irreligious make uſe of a Book written againſt Irreligion. The *Eccleſiaſtes* ſuppoſes every where exiſtence of God, and the creation of man. He condemns the vanity of his deſires: reproaches him with ignorance in the works of God: draws a picture of the chief abuſes of all conditions: threatens all ſinners with the laſt judgement, and exhorts them to repent be-

fore death may overtake them.

It is eaſie to ſee that all this is grounded upon immortality. If the ſoul does not out-live the body, it is needleſs to perſwade to actions of piety, which ſhould go unrewarded; and to deter us from crimes by the image of a judgement to come, which had nothing real in it. Certainly the deſign of *Solomon* being to lead us to God through the duties of a ſincere piety, this Book is directly oppoſite to the error of the deſtruction of the ſoul, the belief of her mortality being the foundation of all Religion.

But had he eſtabliſhed it in any place, with what probability could we make uſe of another

ther to destroy it? Unless we should impute to the Wise man a shameful contradiction, and accuse him to pull down before-hand what he intended to build after.

The scope of the last Chapter is to advise men to serve God from their Youth, and not put off their conversion to the last years of their life, wherein repentance is so suspicious. And having metaphorically described the dissolution of the body in these words: *Ere the wheel be broken at the Cistern*; he breaks off his metaphors, and saies plainly, *Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* 12. 6.

These words make out clearly the immortality of the soul. If our spirit subsists not after the dissolution of the body, how can it return to God? Can a spirit which is annihilated return to his maker? And this seems to be inforced by the comparison he makes of it to the dust. For the dust our body is made of, subsists really after the dissolution of the whole.

Nay, this dust is immortal, no creature being able to annihilate it; and matter remaining incorruptible to any natural power. Therefore the dust of our body subsisting even after our death, *returning to the earth as it was*, who doubts but our

our ſpirit *returning to God who gave it*, ſubſiſts after the ſeparation. There is not the leaſt colour to attribute any other ſenſe to the Wiſe man. And we are naturally led to it by the juſtneſs of the compariſon between theſe two parts of our ſelves. *The ſpirit ſhall return unto God who gave it, as the duſt ſhall return to the earth as it was.* 'Tis the Wiſe-mans propoſition. But the duſt ſubſiſts even after the ſeparation, *and returns really to the earth.* Therefore the ſpirit returning to God who gave it, ſubſiſts really alſo.

Nor is it an amazing thing that our ſoul ſhould be immortal, ſince the duſt and earth ſhe animates is ſo too. And as death

death is not the annihilation of bodies, but their ſeparation from ſouls, and their diſſoluti-on into elements; ſo it is not the annihilation of the ſoul, but its ſeparation from the body, and reunion to God as her ſource.

Indeed after ſo preciſe an aſ-ſertion of the immortality of the ſoul, any ingenious adver-ſary will confeſs, that if ſome obſcure place occurs, it is a rule of common ſenſe to reduce it to the perſpicuity of theſe words.

But what muſt one ſay if that very place the Irreligious uſurps againſt immortality ſhould ſup-poſe it ſo plainly that it is meer nonſenſe out of that ſuppoſiti-on? The

The Wiſe-man ſaies, that having conſidered thoſe places where Judges ſit, he had ſeen wickedneſs in them, and impiety in their judgements, *verſ.* 16, 17. But that their verdicts ſhall be reviewed and reformed, *When God ſhall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time for every purpoſe, and for every work*, that it cannot be underſtood but of the laſt judgement, and conſequently ſuppoſes before-hand the immortality of the ſoul.

He adds, *verſ.* 18, 19. that *he has ſaid in his heart concerning the ſons of men, that God might manifeſt them, and that they might ſee, that they themſelves are beaſts.* 'Tis upon that account in the

Wiſe-

Wiſe-mans opinion, *that as one dies, ſo dies the other. Yea they have all one breath, ſo that a man has no preeminence upon a beaſt, for all is but vanity.* And that they may be convinced of it, *all go to one place, all are of the duſt, and turn to duſt again.* This is ſo ſtrong a prejudice for ſtupid and carnal men, as it inclines them to believe that their condition is perfectly the ſame with that of beaſts. *Who knoweth the ſpirit of man that goes upward, and the ſpirit of the beaſt that goes downward to the earth?* 'Tis almoſt the ſame manner of ſpeaking as that which expreſſes ſo perſpicuouſly the immortality of the ſoul, *and the ſpirit ſhall return unto God who gave it.* Which is the

ſame

same as if he had said; in that deep ignorance of all things men are involved, there is not so much as one who knowes that which no body should be a stranger to, being the foundation of all Religion, that rational souls are immortal, and that of the beasts is not.

It appears therefore clearer than light it self, that the Wiseman proposes not this truth as doubtful, but as undoubtedly granted. Which is an extraordinary manner of speaking. When to exaggerate some points, men are engaged to know, one doubts whether they do know others which are more common? Is there an ignorance, may one say, equal to

that

that of the Popiſh people in many places? They think it lawful to keep another mans goods, as long as the Law does not call them to an account; they blame no Oaths but perjury. Nay, who of them knowes whether there is three perſons in God, and two Natures in Chriſt?

'Tis juſt the ſame trope the Wiſe-man ſpoke in. He is not uncertain whether the ſoul returns to God whence ſhe came, ſince he profeſſes it expreſly at the end of his Book; but he doubts whether amongſt the men of his time, any had light enough to diſcover this truth in the midſt of ſo much darkneſs.

If

If ſpeaking thus he ſeems to doubt of the ſouls immortality; he muſt have doubted alſo of the corruptibility of the ſouls of beaſts, his expreſſion reaching equally to both. *Who knoweth the ſpirit of man that goes upward, and the ſpirit of beaſts that go downward?*

He muſt then mean this. Who knowes whether the ſpirit of man ſubſiſts after death, as it is uſually believed, and that of beaſts periſhes with the body? But is it a thing wiſe *Solomon* could doubt of? Are men naturally inclined to believe ſouls of beaſts immortal? Could he ballance a moment to which he was to aſcribe immortality, mans or beaſt?

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

A ſhort Analyſis of the Book of Eccleſiaſtes.

THere is no conduct more liable to illuſions, than to pick up ſome places favourable to ones opinion, without reflecting upon many others directly oppoſite to it. Thus the Irreligious makes uſe of ſome places in the *Eccleſiaſtes* which ſeem agreeable to his fancies, and leaves an hundred other which ſay the quite contrary.

This artifice is eaſily overthrown by this anſwer, either admit or deny them all, ſince all have the ſame authority.

He

He alledges *Solomon* exhorts us to live pleaſantly : that he declares he ſaw nothing more advantageous under the Sun : and that it was the happineſs God had granted him, as if no other was to be expected. He underſtands all thoſe places of riot and ſenſual pleaſures, thus attributing to the wiſeſt of Kings to excite his Readers to debauchery, and all that can irritate the ſinfulleſt paſſions.

Certainly one muſt needs have a ſtrangely low idea of things, to conceive no other joy but that which is carnal, and imagine *Solomon* exhorts us to fall into exceſs, he confeſſes himſelf to have been guilty of. But one muſt needs be very blind,

who does not ſee, that he relates them only to condem them, and lay open their folly and emptineſs. To diſcern then what the Wiſe-man allowes, from the liberties the Irreligious claims, as if they were conſequences of his doctrine, it ſeemed worth the while to end this diſcourſe by a ſhort analyſis of *Eccleſiaſtes*. The ſenſe of every particular place being to be underſtood by the deſign and ſpirit of the whole Book, which chances to be the ſame, as of this Diſcourſe.

The general aim *Solomon* propoſes to himſelf, is to withdraw mans heart from the love of the world, the enjoyment of creatures, and his eagerneſs for riches and

and tranſitory things, to the end that he may love, fear and ſerve God alone. 'Tis the concluſion he draws from the arguments he has ſpread through the whole book. *Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter. Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God ſhall bring every word into judgement, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil. c.* 12. 13, 14.

The only ground he inſiſts upon to perſwade them, is that the world and all its attendance is vanity, abuſe, darkneſs and miſery for them that ſeek to be happy by it. Thus he begins his diſcourſe, exclaiming, *vanity of vanities, all*

is vanity. Then he gives an exact account of all theſe vanities. He deſcribes exaggerates, and carries them ſo far as to render every one ſenſible of his own miſery. He preſcribes particular remedies for each of them. And becauſe his book is directed to great ſinners, he ſeems to compound with them; and to hinder them from fixing their love in the creatures; he allows them a moderate and lawful uſe of them.

All theſe vanities may be reduced to twenty three: ſome are drawn from the imperfection of creatures in themſelves; others from the ill uſe men make of them.

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The first is that all things under the Sun are tansitory and subject to alteration; that all is obscure and hard to be apprehended; that there is nothing new, and the most glorious things are buried in oblivion as soon as they are gone. c. 1. v. 2, 11. That there are arguments to mortifie our inclination to present things, our curiosity for new discoveries, and above the thirst of Glory and Fame so natural to all men.

Vanity in learning, which requires so constant, and so hard a labour. 16, 18.

Vanity in the pleasures of this life, magnificence of buildings, and great number and variety of attendants. c. 2. v. 1, 11.

Vanity in the ſublimeſt knowledge ſince it procures no advantage to the learned above the ignorant, both dying and being equally forgotten after their death. 12. 17.

Vanity in the hardſhips men undergo night and day, to heap up riches, not knowing whom they gather them for. That it is better to enjoy the fruit of his labours, than heap up ſtill, and ſtarve ones ſelf to inrich an unworthy heir. That this baſeneſs of ſoul is one of the greateſt puniſhments of God, 16, 18, 26.

Vanity in the changes and and cares of men, who are obliged to vary them at every moment. That how great and

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satisfying soever be the works of God, yet mans heart wishing still for an eternal and immutable God, can find no rest in them. So that the best way is to use them moderately, still expecting greater things. *c.* 3. *v.* 1, 15.

Vanity in the injust sentences of judges, which the great Judge will disannul. 16, 17.

Vanity in that notorious equality between man and beast, in life, death and corruption, so as to incline stupid man to doubt of their own souls immortality. 18, 22.

Vanity in calumnies innocent people suffer, and the envy to which they are exposed who excel in any faculty. *c.* 9. *v.* 1, 16.

Va-

Vanity in a mans continual toils who heaps up ſtill, though he has no heir, and intends to haye none. 7, 12.

Vanity in the revolution of ſtates, wherein from the loweſt rank one is often raiſed to the throne. 13, 16.

Vanity in the quick decay of the greateſt fortunes after ſo many pains to be ſetled in them. 12, 19.

Vanity in the greateſt riches, the owner whereof is ſnatcht away before he can enjoy them: that to judge that man by his own principles having put his happineſs in them, he muſt be accounted moſt unhappy. That a Child dying as ſoon as he is born it is not ſo much to be pitied. *c.* 6. 18. Vani-

Vanity in the pompous funerals of the impious, and thoſe falſe commendations ſpent upon them in funeral Sermons.

Vanity in the multitude of objects which are ſo uncertain, as men know not very often which is moſt uſeful to them. *c.* 7. 1, 18.

Vanity in the long life of the impious, and precipitate end of the juſt. 16, 21.

Vanity in women whoſe manners (in *Solomon*'s time) were ſo corrupted that he could find none good. 28, 30.

Vanity in the proſperity of the impious, and perſecutions of the juſt. Whence the Wiſeman takes occaſion to commend

mend them who enjoy uprightly the plenty God has given them. 14, 15.

Vanity in the laborious ſearch into the ſecrets of nature. 16, 17.

Vanity in the deep ignorance we are of our ſtate towards God; and of the great confidence of the impious, becauſe good and evil falls equally upon the juſt and unjuſt. *c.* 9. 1, 22.

Vanity in that fortune and hazard have a greater ſhare in riches than merit.

Vanity in that the beſt counſels either are not hearkned to, or paſs unrewarded. 13, 18.

Vanity in the unequal diſtribution of charges and honours by

by the cheats put upon Princes. c. 10. 1, 2, 5.

The Wiſe-man having ended the tenth Chapter with ſome moral maxims, takes up all the eleventh to commend diſtribution of alms both to the covetous and prodigal. Till at laſt he concludes his Book by exhorting men to return to God, before old age ſhould overtake them, as if he ſaid to them. If ſo many abuſes and vanities cannot unlooſe you from the world; let at laſt the conſideration of old age, which being ſo near, will not permit you to enjoy it a long while, perſwade you to renounce thoſe goods willingly, which you muſt infallibly forſake. This is the con-

concluſion of all his arguments; the conſequence he draws from the conduct of the world he repreſented all a long in his Book; and the end of all is, that there is no ſolid happineſs here, but that it muſt be found in God.

Hence it appears that *Solomon* enumerates thoſe many vanities only to breed in us a diſtaſte of the world. He reckons amongſt them all the pleaſures of his life, the magnificence of his buildings; the ſumptuoſity of entertainments, the greatneſs of his treaſures, the multitude of his attendants, and generally all the diverſions of a numerous and flouriſhing Court. He declares plainly,

that

that having conſidered the works of his hands, all was but vanity, miſery, vexation of mind, and that there is under the Sun no ſolid and permanent happineſs.

And thus when he ſaies at the end of the ſecond Chapter, and in ſome other places, *there is nothing better for man than that he ſhould eat and drink*, it muſt be ſure underſtood of the moderate enjoyment of the world, otherwiſe *Solomon* ſhould not be lookt upon as the wiſeſt, but maddeſt of men.

But let it be far from us to think ſo unworthily of him whom God had endowed with divine wiſdom, to permit an harmleſs innocent joy, and a moderate uſe of riches equal-

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ly diſtant from covetouſneſs and prodigality, is not to open a gap to all ſorts of exceſſes.

Men have been differently towards riches. There has been Saints who to give themſelves wholly to the contemplation of heavenly things, did entirely ſhake them off. Upright men diſpence them ſoberly: Sinners pervert them into an ill uſe, either ſquandring them ſhamefully, or keeping them out of a baſe covetouſneſs. 'Tis to them *Solomon* directs his diſcourſe. It was eaſier to him to keep famous debauches within the bounds of lawful pleaſures, than to perſwade them they ought wholly to forſake them,

and

and pass from one extream to the other. And to cure that baseness of souls which scarce allows some people a sober use of what they possess, his best way was to incite the covetous to their moderate enjoyment.

'Tis true, he makes use also of some other consideration to the same purpose. Sometimes he takes occasion from the restless curiosity wherewith some men search into the secrets of nature, to tell them that a quiet and commodious life is preferrable to that vanity. Sometimes he proposes the necessity of dying incident to every body, and of such influence upon some, as it obscures in their mind

mind the immortality of their ſoul. Nothing being more powerful to ſtop the deſigns of an ambitious man, than to let him underſtand he muſt die, and has no advantage over the moſt deſpicaple beaſts.

The ſmalleſt reflection upon thoſe places, will perſwade any rational man *Solomon* cannot invite us to a ſinful joy, he condemns every where, but rather to an innocent cheerfulneſs inſeparable from a good conſcience. Or if in the ſixth Chapter he thinks him unhappy, who being left heir to a great eſtate cannot enjoy it, he ſpeaks ſtill ſuppoſing that mans inward diſpoſition, who having

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ſet all his happineſs in the goods of this life, is by his death ſpoiled of them, and expects no others in the next.

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THE Third Diſcourſe.

Application of the two precedent Diſcourſes to the Irreligious.

CHAP. I.

That the advantage being ſo great of the ſide of Chriſtian Religion. The Irreligious ought to rid himſelf of all ſorts of prejudices, and the more, becauſe the diſorders of his life is the only ſource of his Irreligion.

IT is rationally expected that no Irreligious man will hereafter think Chriſtianity falſe, becauſe all the articles of

of our faith are not to be demonſtrated as problems of Geometry: they will confeſs it has at leaſt ſome degrees of probability. Which being ſuppoſed, this propſition muſt take with any man of ſenſe, that it being probable Chriſtian Religion may be true, and if ſo, attended with eternal happineſs, or miſery; it concerns him to have it true by all means, and give over all prejudices againſt it.

The Irreligious muſt then examine whether his love to Irreligion is the effect of the perſwaſion of his mind, or of the corruption of his heart; Whether the falſhood, or the ſeverity of his maxims ſtaggers him. Falſhood indeed is offenſive to the

mind, but ſeverity only to the heart and fleſh; and no man, let him be never ſo little concerned for himſelf, will reject Religion upon that account. 'Twould be the greateſt paralogiſm in the world. *Thus Religion is ſevere, it forbids ſenſual pleaſures, therefore it is falſe.* There may be pleaſures ſo ſinful as a Religion may be true, and yet forbid them.

This ſearch into his own heart is the more neceſſary, becauſe pleaſures, and paſſions, which may be called the reaſons of the heart, are the firmeſt grounds of Irreligion. It is worth our obſervation, and is no ſmall argument of its being falſe, that none ever fell into it who

ſought

sought for the truth with sincerity. Study and sobriety never led any man to it. It is not met withall in ones way. There must be wandrings to find it out; nor can it be so till after a laborious task to corrupt and deprave his understanding.

Nature cries, there is a God, and the world is the work of his hands. There is no people so barbarous but has heard that voice. As soon as we had the use of our reason, the Church took care to teach us; that our nature is depraved by sin; that we are born children of wrath; banish our heavenly country; that we stand in need of a Saviour who cures our

wounds, reconciles us to God, and opens to us the Kingdom of Heaven; that Chriſt is that bleſſed redeemer; and that there is no ſalvation out of his Church.

The Irreligious received thoſe inſtructions from his infancy. How came he to forget them ſo ſoon? By what ſad miſchance did he engage in an opinion contrary to what he had learned at School, and condemned by all the examples he ſaw both publick and domeſtick.

It is no hard matter to find out the cauſe of it. Diſorder and Libertiniſm brought him to it. The crimes of his youth have been as ſo many degrees

that

that led him to the bottom of the abiſs. Ill companies added to the corruption of his heart infected and debauched him. The habit of riot and exceſs got ſuch holds on him, as it became a kind of neceſſity. Yet he had preſerved light enough to ſee that his life, and the hopes of another could never agree; and that if what Chriſtianity teaches of the ſevere juſtice of God, of the immortality of our ſouls, and of the laſt judgement, was true, he was the moſt miſerable of men, amidſt his falſe delights.

There was therefore a choice to be made between a life ſo diſordered and a Religion ſo

pure, both being irreconcileable. But how could he break off the fetters of luſt armed and backed with a poſſeſſion of many years? The only thoughts of it made the whole heart rebel againſt the mind. Perhaps he did ſtrive to free himſelf from that oppreſſion, but fell lower than he was before.

He thought it therefore eaſier to extinguiſh what faith and Religion was left him. He turned Almighty God out of the world. Or if he left him his being, 'twas upon condition that he ſhould have nothing to do with him in this life or in the next. He diſannulled the act of the laſt Judgement,

extin-

extinguished the flames of Hell, called them tales and stories to fright Children, and to hinder misery from ever falling upon him, annihilated himself after his death. He put a vail on his eyes only to peep on things. Then he said confidently he saw nothing clearly, and there was no more ground to believe, than to disbelieve, or believe the contrary. In a word, he had rather run to those excesses than refrain his passions.

Yet if Irreligious men will give glory to truth, they must acknowledge that this was the way which led them to the pit. And what other arguments can they expect to be condemned by? Is that licentious life of

theirs

theirs an argument againſt God and his Religion? Is the Goſpel leſs true becauſe they are become ſlaves of their paſſions? Certainly they might degenerate into the very ſtate of beaſts, truth would not be leſs unchangeable. Before they had engaged ſo deeply in ſin, when they lived an honeſt, Chriſtian life, there was a God, maker of Heaven and Earth, a Jeſus Chriſt who had redeemed us with his blood, their ſoul was immortal, and had they perſevered in thoſe commendable beginnings, Faith and Religion would never have decayed.

But ſince they live diſorderly all the world is altered. There is no God, no Chriſt, no

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Angels, no Devils, no ſouls. There is no Heaven to hope, no Hell to fear. All that has been annihilated in a moment, or become ſo obſcure, as not to be apprehended. But oh wonder! they begun to open their eyes only ſince they gave themſelves to the love of Creatures, whoſe natual effect is to blind. Now, are they not ſenſible of the inſufferable abſurdity of theſe pretences? And if they will anſwer ſincerely: what other proofs they need to be convinced that they are out of the way.

But as their ſinful inclinations darkned their underſtanding, they muſt never hope to ſee clear in the things of God

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till they are free from their ſlavery. Our heart being prepoſſeſt with a violent paſſion for any object, is not calm and unconcerned enough to judge whether the Law which condemns its exceſſes is juſt. He declares before hand againſt a Religion which bars him from his moſt tender deſires as an enemy to his quiet. And the mind covered with the miſt paſſion caſts over it, cannot weigh impartially the moſt ſolid reaſons.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Three Obstacles the Irreligious must remove by three contrary dispositions.

IF then the Irreligious seeks the truth with sincerity, which the doctrine of Christ alone can lead us to, let him remove all the obstacles that hinder him from being perswaded. They may be reduced to three; two of which are in him, and the last in God himself.

The first is his sensual pleasures and passions, the ordinary causes of his sins. The least passion naturally obstructs the mind, and un-

unfits it to pierce the cloud that lies over the truth. But ſenſual pleaſures are directly oppoſite to the Goſpel of Chriſt; and 'twere a miracle if a ſoul charmed and poſſeſt with them could underſtand Religion.

And ſo a ſober, innocent life free from paſſions and ſins is the firſt diſpoſition required of an Irreligious man. He muſt begin before-hand to live in a manner anſwerable to the dignity of the law he examines. The King of Heaven as jealous of his authority as the Kings of the Earth, exacts from thoſe rebels that they ſhould put down their arms before he enters into any conditions of peace. This obedience of theirs will be a preparation

paration to faith, as faith is a neceſſary condition to apprehend our myſteries. The Irreligious would apprehend before he ſhould believe and obey: but he muſt do both before he can apprehend, *Niſi credideris non intelligetis.* We cannot know it better than from the author of our faith. The practice of his doctrine is the only way to know whether it comes from Heaven? He will will make an happy experiment of the truth of the words of the Prophet. *The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul. The teſtimony of the Lord is pure, making wiſe the ſimple. The ſtatutes of the Lord are right, rejoycing the heart. The commandment of*

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the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever. The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

Thus the Irreligious must begin to examine the true Religion; otherwise he flatters himself in vain to have done his indeavours in that search. As long as his heart is stained by the love of creatures, he has not gone the first step. But seeking Religion without forsaking his vices, he united things that are irreconcileable.

The second obstacle the Irreligious meets in his waies, is a disturbed busie life, which tying him to present things, leaves

leaves him no time to think upon his true concerns. He is never at home. External objects carry him from himſelf. And care, ſtudy and application being the only means that can help him in his ſearch, without them his undertaking will prove unſucceſsful. God is not to be found but in true Religion. The Church he has founded *is his dwelling place.* There is from it but illuſions and deceit. True Religion is very often covered with obſcurities, which incline proud men to think it falſe. God has hid himſelf as it were with a cloud, that men might ſeek for him. He needs therefore all the application, care and induſtry he

is capable of to ſee through it. If he ſucceeds or miſtakes, he is happy or miſerable for ever.

The laſt obſtacle the Irreligious muſt overcome is the juſtice of God he has provok'd, who to be revenged of him, *Spargit pœnales cæcitates ſuper illicitas cupiditates.* The wrath of God is manifeſted in him by his indifference for any Religion, his invincible hatred to any thing that can diſturb the happy peace he enjoyes; and the diſpoſition he is in to live a pleaſant, eaſie, delicious life.

From that deplorable ſtate of his flowes naturally a third condition neceſſary to an Irreligious man who begins to open his eyes, and that is, a violent

grief.

grief. If it be true that there is a God, ſuch as Chriſtians adore, can there be a creature more an enemy to him, and conſequently more miſerable? Can a greater injury be done to almighty God, than to exclude him from the number of Beings; contemn his Laws; laugh at his threatnings; reckon him a fancy which ſubſiſts only in a crackt brain; and live in a total independence from him.

He cannot therefore be too much afflicted when he ſeeks for God; the loſs he makes of him being inſeparable from his own.

Theſe are the obſtacles may deter him from Chriſtian Religion. Let his experience ju-

ſtifie the ſanctitie and ſecurity of thoſe means. Let them try the truth of its maxims before they reject it, there being ſo nearly concerned that their eternal happineſs lies at the ſtake. And *what is a man profited if he ſhall gain the whole world and loſe his ſoul? and what ſhall he give in exchange for his ſoul*, if ever he chance to loſe it?

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Irreligious cannot be neuter in matters of Religion.

THe other part of the comparison being that Irreligion leads to eternal torments, is yet of nearer concern to Irreligious men. They may be apt to say that they renounce all other, if they can be secure of their present happiness. That they have made choice of earth for their eternal mansion; and that this eternity of joyes so much talkt of could not make amends for their loss. This ridiculous and foolish answer is

made by ſome with great earneſtneſs. Preſent things have charms ſo ſtrong for them, that they cannot be torn from them. Their heart can love, and their mind ſee nothing elſe.

Indeed their conduct would not be ſo ſtrange and unpardonable, if there were but eternal happineſs to be won or loſt. They might renounce it nor think themſelves more miſerable for it. But everlaſting torments being into the bargain, that is the moſt lamentable condition can be imagined; is not only uſeful, but of an indiſpenſable obligation to them to change their belief. There is no doubting and conſidering one ſingle moment.

ment. 'Tis fury, and Frenſie rather to be expoſed to eternal torments than to embrace a party where there is no riſque at all.

'Tis true, Irreligion only prefers annihilation to being and life: a nothing free from ſentiment and miſery to a life infinitely happy. And to give the beſt colour to their choice, they imagine that if they loſe it they are free from the ſmart of their loſs; ſince he can ſuffer nothing who is annihilated. But they will not ſee that in the uncertainty the queſtion was all along ſuppoſed to be, their pretended annihilation has its dangers and horrors too. If they chance not to be anni-

hilated, as it may, or may not be, they loſe not only a bleſſed immortality, but fall into an everlaſting miſery. But if having performed all the duties of the Goſpel they are cheated of their hopes, they can be annihilated, which was their firſt choice. This ſeems clear beyond all expreſſion.

Well, ſaies the Irreligious, I reject both immortality, and annihilation. I intend to be neither Chriſtian nor Irreligious. I will keep a perfect neutrality. That cannot be. Of two oppoſite parties, you muſt fix upon one. To ſuſpend is to declare your choice. Not to embrace the Doctrine of Chriſt, is to oppoſe him.

Since

Since 'tis no matter which way we go to work, whether by a direct and formal oppoſition of a contrary Sect, or by a negative unbelief; either of them ſpoiling him of his honour.

Since then there is no medium between theſe two extreams, you muſt declare; But of which ſide? For that which is the ſureſt. You can do no leſs, if you have not loſt all ſenſe and care of your ſelf. In either of them there is ſomething to hope, or fear. The hope of Irreligion is annihilation; its fears eternal torments. The hopes of Religion are eternal happineſs, its fears, annihilation. So as it was proved

ved before the greateſt peril of Chriſtianity if it proves falſe, is the greateſt advantage of impiety if it proves true.

Suppoſing then, as we have already done, both parties full of equal uncertainty, you ought ſtill to embrace Religion, moved thereunto, if not by the certainty of the object, at leaſt by the neceſſity you are in determining between two objects, the one infinitely dreadful, the other infinitely advantagious. You muſt chuſe a Religion. You muſt avoid that which is attended by an unſpeakable miſery. Theſe two neceſſities are equal to any certainty.

I am

I am obliged, ſaies the Irreligious, to be a Chriſtian to the double neceſſity I am put to of chooſing between Religion and Irreligion, and to avoid that of the two, wherein I may be loſt for ever. But I am nothing the better for it. My will may ſubmit, but my underſtanding is not convinced. I deſire, but cannot believe. 'Tis uſeful, 'tis neceſſary to believe, but that is nothing to me; ſince no man could paſs from doubt to perſwaſion upon ſuch ground as this; *That whatſoever is good and uſeful to believe is undoubtedly true.*

Certainly what greater prejudice can there be for the truth

of

of doctrine which frees us from eternal torments, than the neceſſity of believing it. That delivery of ours being a neceſſary, real, effective good, all that can contribute efficaciouſly to it, muſt have the ſame qualifications. And there is no Chimera, the belief whereof be neceſſary, or good, to avoid eternal miſery.

It is therefore generally true, that whatever is good, or neceſſary to believe, is true and certain; ſince if it were not ſo, there would be no uſe or neceſſity of believing it. If telling lies be ſometimes of any uſe, ſure believing of them is of none at all. Much leſs is there an obligation of being perſwa-

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ded of them. And we may apply to falſhood what *Tertullian* ſaies of Sin : That they whoſe concern it is not to be miſtaken in matters of Religion, are far from making it neceſſary to be miſtaken. *Nulla eſt neceſsitas peccandi iis quibus una eſt neceſsitas non peccandi.* But the Irreligious acknowledge it good and neceſſary to believe Chriſtian Religion, that he may avoid eternal damnation; therefore he muſt conclude it true, and embrace it.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The least degree of probability Religion has above Irreligion, is enough to bring the Irreligious to a very probable opinion, and from opinion to faith.

SUppoſing Religion true and certain in it ſelf, it is not ſo to me, ſaies the Irreligious, who ſeeing nothing in it but uncertain, or at moſt probable. Faith implies an aſſent to what you believe as to a certain, and not a probable thing. How therefore can I believe any Religion as undoubted which is ſtill uncertain to me.

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This indeed cannot be as long as you have no greater light. But till it increases and flames to a higher degree, do now what lies in your power. You confess Christianity is a little more probable than Irreligion. That can hinder you then to embrace the most probable party, and specially when it secures your eternity, reputation, and all other advantages. Must you be divided and racked by different passions, and complain at the same time of the necessity and impossibility of believing? And why will you deny your self in this occasion, that which you do in all others, that is, to follow the most probable opinion? Irreligion

ligion was no less uncertain to you at that very time you lookt upon it, as more probable than Christianity. Yet its uncertainty did not fright you from running into it. The liberty and independency it promised made you resign up all your doubts. Why then, the one giving you so great hopes do you refuse to do for it what you do for the other.

Perhaps you deny it to be more probable. Well, let it be so. The most you can do for Irreligion is to doubt. Maintain as long as you please the eternity of the World, and the mortality of the soul. Put your sentiments in their most favourable light, you can never de-

demonſtrate and free them from doubts. After all your endeavours they will be ſtill opinions, and nothing but opinions. But if you doubt of them in the leaſt, you ought to forſake them. It being an horrid madneſs to venture your ſalvation upon an uncertain opinion. *Ipſo facto*, that it is an opinion it may be falſe; and if it be ſo, you ruine your ſelf for ever. In a concern as important as eternity is, you muſt rely upon dogms which cannot miſlead you.

But till you conceive how far Chriſtianity is from miſleading you, ſubmit to it. That ſtedfaſt diſpoſition of mind to believe comes from the will;

and if this be determined, the other will quickly be perſwaded. Faith muſt not depend upon the relation of ſenſes, or the evidence of reaſon, but its own determination. You are not concerned to know, but to believe. Science may challenge demonſtrations, but the glory of faith is to ſubmit to Gods authority. Though its ſeat be in the mind, yet it depends almoſt totally from the will: which induced St. *Auſtin* to ſay, that it depends from humane liberty to believe or not believe.

If ſome want penetration and light, none wants a good will. Nothing elſe is required to believe. Almighty God ſo tem-

tempered our faith, as to proportion it to all sorts of trains, because being absolutely necessary to salvation, and the penetration of men so different; had it depended from their parts the unlearned would have been excluded from it. But now the Ignorant are even with the greatest Doctors. Thus it is easie to pass from uncertainty to certainty, forcing our understanding to believe. Notwithstanding all its reluctances; and reducing uncertainty to inevidence which is the character of Faith.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Irreligious of education, if there is any, may be convinced of the truth of Chriſtianity, by Scripture, and miracles. The Irreligious of profeſſion muſt ſupply his want of evidence by a ſincere hearty will.

I Do not know what can be oppoſed to thoſe principles except one ſhould ſay that faith depends not immediately from the will, becauſe the will does not believe by it ſelf, but only determines the underſtanding to believe. But that determination ſtill preſuppoſes a conviction; the empire of the will

will being not ſo great as to ſway the underſtanding, without at leaſt a ſeeming reaſon to ſatisfie it.

This Objection might be of ſome weight, propoſed by an Irreligious man of education altogether unacquainted with Chriſtianity. Then I would prove the exiſtence of God by the teſtimonies he gave of himſelf in the Scripture, and the Scripture by thoſe infinite wonders he wrought by *Moſes*, Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

The Apoſtles converted the world with arguments of this nature. Nations aſtoniſhed at the ſight of dead men riſing from their graves, could not doubt whether the power

which exceeded ſo much that of nature, did really exiſt. Miracles made it viſible to their eyes; and this was the object to which their will applied their underſtanding, to the end it might be ſubject to the obedience of faith.

Nor has that ſort of Irreligious men leſs ground to believe them, than all the Nations converted by the Apoſtles. They muſt look upon thoſe miracles as if they had been wrought before their own eyes. They have in them the ſame power of conviction as they had before, and prove no leſs againſt them than they did againſt the Heathens. The differences of time take nothing from proofs which

which conſiſts in matters of fact. Miracles may paſs, but the truth of a fact is unchangeable. It out-laſts them; and as long as it is true that Chriſt and his Servants wrought miracles to prove his divinity, they muſt ſeem to any rational man invincible arguments.

Suppoſing then that any man born Irreligious, ſhould deſire light to fire his underſtanding upon, that he might believe; he ſhould ſeek no where for it but in the authority of God who has ſpoken in the Scriptures, and authoriſed the Scriptures by miracles. When God ſpeaks to us, his words are infallible, his au-

thority ſoveraign; our ſubmiſſion bears no limitations: and the diſpute being reduced to matter of fact, any ingenuous ſouls would be eaſily ſatisfied. But there is no ſuch Irreligious of education, all men being brought up in ſome Religion or other. The Irreligious of our times are ſo of profeſſion, decaied Chriſtians, concealed Apoſtates, who having been brought up in the principles of Chriſtianity, were carried to Irreligion either by corrupted companies, bad books, and above all, a prodigious inclination to riot and exceſſes. They want no light to believe the ſymbol of the Apo-

Apoſtles. They need but remember what they had been taught before their depravation, and refreſh thoſe Ideas ſin has ſo entirely defaced in them.

They pretend they cannot believe, becauſe they do not ſee things with their own eyes.

But there is a vaſt difference between not believing a thing, becauſe we have proofs of its falſhood, and not believing it becauſe we want ſufficient arguments of its truth. The underſtanding may be more eaſily ſubdued in the ſecond ſenſe than in the firſt; and the will ſwaied by the authority of the ſpeaker

ſpeaker may ſupply the want of Reaſon.

This inſufficiency or rather inevidence of proofs is the only foundation of their incredulity. But alas, how groundleſs and irrational? How wonderful is the confidence of men who complain of the inſufficiency of proofs to believe Chriſtianity, whereas they have the ſame inſufficiency in the principles of Irreligion. How many times did paſſion or the authority of their Teachers ſupply their want of reaſon? Did they not produce ſo many acts of faith as there are incomprehenſible conſequences in the worlds eternity? Why do they refuſe

refuſe to do the ſame now, and rely upon an authority conſiderable by an infinite number of miracles.

They grant no more in that, but what is required of them either in ſciences, or in the commerce of humane life. They are concerning the ſecrets of God as an apprentice totally unacquainted with the principles, and terms of the art he learns. But there is no principle apprentice, as the Philoſopher and experience teach us, but muſt believe what he cannot apprehend. The blind belief he gives to his Maſters directions, is the foundation of all the perfection he can come

come to in his Art. The firſt elements of every Science cannot be proved; and ſuppoſing they could, an apprentice is not able to underſtand them. His beſt is to receive them with an entire acquieſcence of mind.

Why then do not the Irreligious in matters ſo dark as Religion is, imitate Apprentices in the firſt rudiments which are given them, or remember what they did themſelves when they firſt learned any thing? Are they more knowing in the deep myſteries of Chriſtianity, than they were in Geometry and Muſick. They aſſented blindfold to him who taught them to play upon the Lute;

and

and they will not be ashamed to exact from God demonstrations for every Article of his Doctrine. Certainly Irreligion carries men to strange extremities. Is it possible they should not see, that their reason must the more submit to Gods Authority, because those mysteries he reveals unto us are infinitely more disproportion'd to our senses, than all Arts and Sciences in the world.

THE END.

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